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ABSTRACT

Designed to assist those training interviewers in the group interview technique for assessment of educational needs, this manual contains a review of the technique, responsibilities of the interviewers, interview preparation, and a self-evaluation guide, as well as the interview questions with procedural suggestions. As a substitute for observing a needs assessment interview, the authors have prepared for a videotape of an interview; a note on how to arrange for its use is included. For a description of the development and field test results of this technique, see "Assessing Education Needs of Minnesota Library Personnel: A Proposed Technique" in the Summer 1976 issue of "Minnesota Libraries." (Author/JD)

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EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

GROUP INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE

TRAINING MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

This manual is designed to assist those training interviewers in the group interview technique for assessment of educational needs. It contains a review of the technique, responsibilities of the interviewers, interview preparation, and a self-evaluation guide, as well as the interview questions with procedural suggestions.

The group interview technique is effective in determining educational needs because it allows participants to express their perceived needs in their own language and to clarify their ideas through interaction with other participants and with members of the interview team. In addition, it generates enthusiasm for and interest in the learning activities which can be designed around the expressed needs. It gives potential purveyors specific information about the nature and scope of the activities to be designed.

The group interview technique uses multiple interviewers and a schedule of questions grouped into four modules. The interviewers serve the functions of questioning, recording and process observing. The four modules of questions focus on four areas:

1) the knowledge and skills needed by personnel of libraries or other organizations;

2) types of formats for learning;

3) incentives and recognition for participation in continuing education activities;

4) responsibility of individuals, groups, agencies and schools to continuing education.

INTERVIEWERS

Questioner

Responsibilities

1. Poses the questions to the group in terms familiar to them;
2. Listens, LISTENS. Does not edit. Does not offer own opinion;
3. Makes responses understood by recorder and all members of the group;
4. Encourages everyone to talk;
5. Pauses, allowing group members to break silences;
6. Establishes a relaxed, non-threatening climate;
7. Encourages interaction among the group members;
8. Is conscious of time. Paces the interview; and
9. Reports results.

Selection

1. Able to exercise above responsibilities;
2. Should be from outside the group in order to establish an open and non-threatening climate;
3. Familiar with vocabulary of the group and of the field.

Recorder

Responsibilities

1. Posts responses to the questions in the words of the respondents;
2. Posts on newsprint or on chalkboard so that responses can be read by group;
3. Uses keywords, but does not edit;
4. Requests clarification of terms when necessary; and
5. Reports results.

Selection

1. Able to exercise above responsibilities;
2. May be member of the group;
3. Familiar with vocabulary of the group and of the field.

Process Observer

Responsibilities

1. Assists questioner, recorder and participants in communicating the intent of the responses;
2. Intervenes to promote group interaction;
3. Intervenes to confront communication problems within the group;

4. Intervenes to prevent interviewer bias;
5. Keeps the discussion of each module of questions within the time allotted; and
6. Counts votes when the group assigns priority to their needs.

Selection

1. Able to exercise above responsibilities;
2. Must have previous experience with group process.

MATERIALS

1. Newsprint or chalkboard
2. Non-bleeding magic markers in two or three bold colors
3. Masking tape
4. Data sheets (see p. 14)
5. Watch or clock

ARRANGING FOR INTERVIEW

With sponsor, who may represent an organization, a cooperating organization such as a regional system, or a professional group, determine:

1) What information is needed;

2) How results are to be used;

3) What modules to use;

4) Who is to be interviewed:
   a) Entire staff or membership
   b) Sample or classification level(s)

5) Whether data sheets are needed;

6) Time and place;

7) Whether member of the group being interviewed is to serve as a member of the interview team;

8) Format for report and to whom the report should be made.

STARTING THE INTERVIEW

1. Ask a member of the sponsoring group to introduce the interview team.

2. Tell the group why they are being involved.

3. Tell the group how the results of the interview will be used.

4. Explain briefly the interviewing process. Point out that the process takes approximately ninety minutes if all four modules of questions are used.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Notes to the Interviewers:

A. (allow maximum of 30 minutes)
Introductory Question: Ask group to define continuing education or to identify a substitute term.

TOPICS: Topic generation, definitions of what is meant if necessary, what in each topic is needed, what type of knowledge, information, skill, then for whom. Questions 1-a, 1-b will determine format sufficiently for trainer or education coordinator.

1. First list all the topics generated by the group. Then for each topic, ask questions 1-a through 1-b4. Include as many in the discussion as possible. If an organization's staff, try to get comments from those at all levels.

Questioner: (Q) Emphasize YOU, the individual. To get discussion started, ask group members to describe an incident in which the need for additional knowledge or skill was important. Limit descriptions to 3-4 incidents.

Recorder: (R) Divide newsprint or chalkboard into 4 columns. Label first column "Topic," second column "What specifically," label third column "For Whom," and label fourth column "Priority." In first column, record three or four keywords USED BY GROUP MEMBER indicating topic. (example follows Topics Questions)

R: Enter in second column key words USED BY GROUP MEMBERS indicating specifics of topic.

Questions to be asked by Interviewers:

Introductory question: Define Continuing Education or what term would group prefer for work-related educational activities.

TOPICS:

1. What are the topics you would like addressed in Continuing Education activities?

Then

a. What is it specifically you want to know about the topic?

1. is it new information?
2. is it updating of knowledge?
3. is it expert opinion?
4. is it a skill you would like to acquire or improve?

5. is it awareness and ability to deal with particular issues and publics?
6. do you want to share problems/expertise with peers or others in the same work?

R: Enter in third column words used by group members indicating who.

b. Who would benefit from this?

1b2Q: Identify the various levels for group.

1. you?
2. who on your staff?
3. others like you in other similar organizations? or other types of organizations?
4. are there any others you can identify?

Q: Ask group to give each topic a 1,2, or 3. 1 - needed immediately; 2 - within a year; 3 - useful, but can be at a future date. Emphasize that each person is to vote for each topic in terms of self interest. This is not to result in a ranking, but in a measure of interest of the persons in the group. Ideally, each person will vote on each item. Tally the votes. Ask for volunteers to count votes if group numbers more than twenty.

c. What priority would you assign to each of these topics?

R: Enter in fourth column the vote tallies for each category, i.e., 1 = , 2 = , 3 = .

EXAMPLE FOR RECORDER

Topic	What specifically	For whom	Priority
			1 = 2 = 3 =

B. (allow maximum of 20 minutes)

FORMAT: Aimed at generalized opinions about various formats, how to improve format if used, what to heed. Format specific to topic will be determined by questions 1-a, 1-b.

1. Q: You may wish to suggest some of the following: workshops, conferences, lectures, discussions, audio tapes, video tapes, peer group sharing, learning-by-doing, correspondence courses, reading.

   R: Divide newsprint or chalkboard into three columns: label the first column "Well liked," second column "Least-liked," and the third column "Like to try." (See example following the Format questions.)

2-3. R: Provide two columns. Label the first "Repeated," label the second "Sequenced." (See example following Format questions.)

4. At your discretion, a fourth question might be added: Would you like to comment about how CE activities are handled or organized? This should elicit comments on timing, distance, scheduling. Or the question can be even more specific: e.g., how does timing affect your attendance? These comments might also be made in answer to questions 1 and 2 under Incentive/Recognition.

   R: On a separate sheet of newsprint list the comments.

FORMAT:

1. For learning activities including work-oriented ones,
   a. What has worked best for your learning?
   b. What has not worked? Why?
   c. What have you heard about that you would be willing to try?

2. Are there topics, among those you named, that should be repeated? Yearly? More often? Less often?

3. Should there be sequencing for topics? Which ones?

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR JOB

1. What is your job title?

2. Describe your position in 25 words or less.

3. How many others have positions similar to yours in your system?

4. Job specialty: Please indicate before each that applies to you the number (1, 2, 3, or 4) that is an approximate estimate of time spent in each specialty.

   (1) up to 25%
   (2) 26-50%
   (3) 51-75%
   (4) 76-100%

_____ Acquisitions
_____ Cataloging and organizing materials
_____ Circulation
_____ Direct service to patrons
_____ Reference and Information services
_____ Editing and/or writing
_____ Non-print materials
_____ Personnel
_____ Public Relations
_____ Selection of materials
_____ Children's services
_____ Young people's services
_____ Government publications
_____ Clerical work
_____ Other

5. Is your present position located in a:

_____ Regional Library headquarters
_____ Public Library _____ headquarters _____ branch
_____ Special Library (specify) _____
_____ College Library
_____ University Library
_____ School Media Center
_____ Other (specify) _____

6. Do you supervise others? How many? At what levels?

7. Please give a priority of 1 or 2 or 3 or 0 to each of the topics listed by members of the group.

Topic 1. _____ 4. _____ 7. _____ 10. _____ 13. _____ 16. _____

2. _____ 5. _____ 8. _____ 11. _____ 14. _____ 17. _____

3. _____ 6. _____ 9. _____ 12. _____ 15. _____ 18. _____

8. If any topics of interest to you were not listed, please add them.

9. Name (optional) _____

REPORTING THE RESULTS

Depending upon arrangements made with the sponsor of the interview, the report can be submitted in one of three ways:

1) Give the sponsor the newsprint with instructions for interpretation.

2) Transcribe the responses from newsprint or chalkboard onto 8½" x 11" paper divided into columns similar to the newsprint/chalkboard. Analyze and interpret responses, and enter into an added column labelled "Comments."

3) Prepare a narrative report of the results combined with the observations and analysis of the interview team.

SELF-EVALUATION GUIDE

Questioner:

Introduction
- was purpose of technique clearly stated?
- was process for introducing participants necessary and used?
- was an open climate effected for group discussion?

Questioning
- were the questions clearly stated?
- were comments repeated back to interviewees in their own language?
- was terminology clarified?
- how conscious was interviewer of non-verbal communication?
- were responses to questions terminated appropriately, too soon, or dragged on too long?
- were transitions from one phase of the interview to the next done clearly and consistently?

Ending
- was everyone in the group ready to end?
- was it agreed upon to whom the information should be sent?
- were responsibilities for follow-up clearly defined? agreed to?

Process Person:
- was there intervention into the interview process? for what reasons?
- were all participants brought into discussion?
- were runaway discussions halted?
- did group keep to task?
- was time schedule met?
- were group problems confronted? how?

Recorder:
- was posting in language in which responses were given?
- was writing clear and legible?

Physical Arrangements:
- could everyone see everyone else?
- could everyone see the postings?
- enough newsprint, chalk, markers, tape, etc.?
- coffee, temperature and climate suitable?

NOTE ABOUT VIDEO TAPE

As a substitute for observing a needs assessment interview, a video tape of an interview was prepared by the authors. To arrange for its use, contact:

Mary Wagner, Chairperson
Department of Library Science
College of St. Catherine
2004 Randolph Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota 55105

EXAMPLES FOR RECORDER

Question 1.

Well liked	Least liked	Like to try

Questions 2-3.

Repeated	Sequenced

C. (allow maximum of 20 minutes)

INCENTIVE/RECOGNITION: What motivates individuals to participate in CE activities?

1. Q: You may have to suggest possibilities: recertification, requirement to job, pay increase, reimbursement, compensation of time, increased authority, topic, relevance of topic to job, expertise of speaker.

   R: Divide newsprint or chalkboard into two columns. Label the first column "Why participate," label the second column, "Why not." (See example following Incentive/Recognition questions.) Enter responses to question 1 in first column.

2. Q: You may have to suggest possibilities: ability to get away, publicity, location distance, timing, covering work schedule, expense, relevance, lack of interest, other commitments -- e.g., family.

   R: Enter key words in second column -- "Why not."

3. Q: Indicate the question has two parts -- who and what.

   R: Divide the newprint or chalkboard into three columns. Label the first "Who," the second column "What," the third column "How." (See example following the I/R questions.)

INCENTIVE/RECOGNITION:

1. Why do you choose to participate in any particular CE activity?

2. When you don't attend, why don't you?

3. Who or what encourages you to participate in CE opportunities?

   a. How are you encouraged?
   b. How are other levels of your staff encouraged?

4. Is some form of Continuing Education a requirement in your organization or system? Describe.

5. Q: Distinguish between requirement and recognition.

R: Divide newsprint or chalkboard into two columns. Label the first column "You favor," label the second column "Currently used." (See example following I/R questions.)

6. Q: Suggestions: a professional organization, a library education program.

R: On a separate sheet of newsprint list the respondents' answers.

EXAMPLES FOR RECORDER

Questions 1-2.

Why participate	Why not

Question 3.

Who	What

Question 5.

You favor	Currently used

5. What recognition within the organization do you favor be received by anyone participating in CE activities?

a. What recognition is currently in use?

6. Is formal recognition by an agency outside your organization desirable for you?

D. (allow maximum of 20 minutes)

RESPONSIBILITY: Who should do what -- Sponsors, organizers, those conducting and arranging, financers...

1. R: Divide the newsprint or chalkboard into three columns. Label the first column "Who currently," label the second column "Who should," label the third column "Types." (See example following Responsibility questions.)

2-4. Q: Include as many of the following as possible: supervisors, administrators, library system, professional organizations, government agencies, library schools, other educational agencies.

R: Enter key words in second column.

3. R: Enter key words in third column.

5. R: Divide the newsprint or chalkboard into two columns. Label the first column "System," label the second column "Individual." (See example following Recognition questions.)

7. Q: Include at your discretion. This may have been covered in the negotiation or at the time of the introduction.

RESPONSIBILITY:

1. Who currently provides the CE opportunities you attend?

2. Who else should provide CE opportunities?

3. What kind of opportunities could each of these groups provide?

4. What do you see as the responsibility of each of these groups to CE as a whole?

5. What should your organization or system pay for? What are you willing to pay for?

6. CE is mandatory for persons in nursing, law and education. Should some form of CE be mandatory for your profession?

7. Who should get the information from this interview process?

EXAMPLES FOR RECORDER

Questions 1-3.

Who currently	Who should	Types

Question 5.

System	Individual